

VZCZCXRO4035  
OO RUEHFL RUEHNP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHRO #2061 2001359  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 191359Z JUL 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5413  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0432  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 1585  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 7382  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 1672

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 002061

SIPDIS

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [GOV](#) [LE](#) [IS](#) [IT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL SEES IMPROVEMENT ON THE ITALIAN LEFT

REF: ROME 1967

Classified By: POL M/C David D. Pearce for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary. Israel sees an improving attitude by much of the Italian left toward Israel, according to an Israeli Embassy official in Rome. In a July 18 address to Parliament, FM D'Alema said Israel's reaction to Hezbollah in Lebanon was legitimate, but "went beyond all reasonable proportions." D'Alema reiterated Italy's willingness to participate in an international peacekeeping force and work for a donors' conference for Lebanon. End summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Pol MC and PolOff met July 18 with Israeli DCM Elazar Cohen to discuss the ongoing conflict with Lebanon. Cohen said the situation would have only gotten worse if Israel had waited, giving Hezbollah more time to increase its arms arsenal. As it was, Cohen said, Israel had made two critical mistakes: 1) not to stop Hezbollah's arms buildup; and 2) not to push the international community for implementation of UNSCR 1559 (especially regarding the disarming of militias).

¶3. (C/NF) Cohen said military actions alone would not solve the problem. He viewed Hezbollah's attack, which came right before Iran was due to respond to EU High Representative Solana on the nuclear issue, as a signal from Iran. The international community needed a mechanism to deal not only with Hezbollah but also with Iran and Syria, otherwise an international peacekeeping force would be useless. He viewed the "unusual" step taken by Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia in condemning Hezbollah as moderate Arab states taking advantage of a window of opportunity to send a strong message to all these parties.

¶4. (C/NF) Noting that Larijani's visit to Rome (reftel) occurred right before his meeting with Solana, Cohen said that the Italian approach appeared to be to offer Iran something, e.g., a dialogue on regional security, in return for its cooperation on the nuclear issue. Prodi told Larijani to use its leverage on Hezbollah, Iraq, and Afghanistan, Cohen said, but he hoped Prodi also told Iran to change its leverage "180 degrees" because it was currently being used to support Hezbollah's actions, not deter them.

¶5. (C) Cohen said Prodi had spoken to PM Olmert twice since the outbreak of the conflict. Olmert's planned July 27 for Rome has been postponed. (Prodi reportedly now plans to visit Israel on the 27th instead.) The Italians were trying hard to demonstrate that the Prodi government had not changed Italy's views toward relations with Israel. He said the Berlusconi government had reversed previous Italian policy of viewing the conflict as a zero-sum game, where support for the Arabs excluded any support for Israel, seeing it instead

as a positive-sum game in which Italy maintained ties and access with both sides.

¶6. (C) Democrats of the Left (DS) leader Fassino and MFA U/S Vernetti both attended the July 17 torchlight demonstration at the Rome synagogue. Cohen said Israel was pleased with what it saw as a changing attitude by much of the Italian left; now only some of the far left parties were unalterably anti-Israel. He noted that moderate members of extreme left parties like Communist Renewal were now being criticized by their more extreme wings for the (more balanced) approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

¶7. (C) This meeting occurred several hours before FM D'Alema addressed Parliament on the conflict, in which he again acknowledged Israel's right to self-defense but also said, "Israel's reaction, albeit legitimate on the basis of self-defense according to the UN Charter, went beyond all reasonable proportions." While terming Iranian and Syrian involvement "difficult to verify," he underscored that the crisis was sparked by radical forces supported and funded from the outside, citing specifically both Hamas (based in Damascus) and Hezbollah. D'Alema also reiterated Italy's willingness to contribute to an international force "after the cease-fire" and to work actively for a donors' conference on Lebanon.  
SPOGLI